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(56) Documents cited
GB 2231701 A GB 1558521 A GB 1391060 A

(58) Field of search
UK CL (Edition K) G4V VAA VAK
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(54) Credit-operated machines

(57) A credit-operated award-giving machine, such as a games playing machine of the fruit or betting machine kind, is operated by means of a portable data storage device which may be of the credit-card type. The storage device is read by inserting device into slot 7 and stored credit is decremented before a game is played. In the event that a win is achieved stored credit is appropriately incremented on the storage device or on a second storage device. When a single storage device is used for reading of credit and award writing the machine has a separate award-writing location 8. The storage device may then be re-presented to slot 7 for further games or, alternatively, there may be a separate reader machine which is used to read and then decrement the award value in correspondence with the making of a pay out or prize award. When two separate storage devices for credit supply and award storage they may both be presented to the same read/write slot of the games playing machine or to different slots.

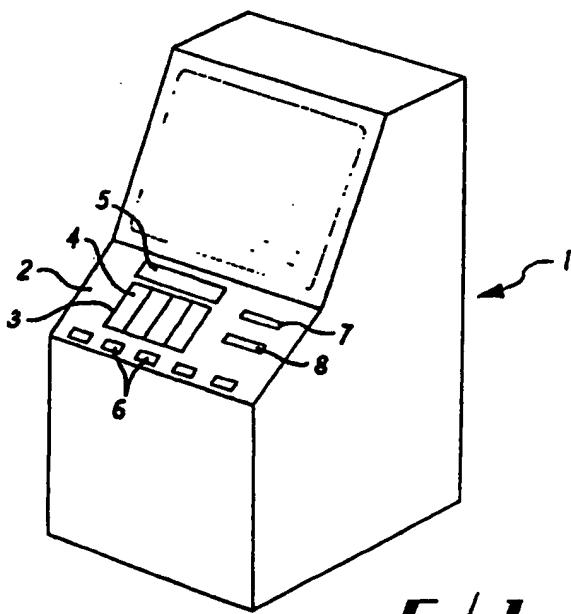


Fig. 1

At least one drawing originally filed was informal and the print reproduced here is taken from a later filed formal copy
The claims were filed later than the filing date within the period prescribed by Rule 25(1) of the Patents Rules 1990.

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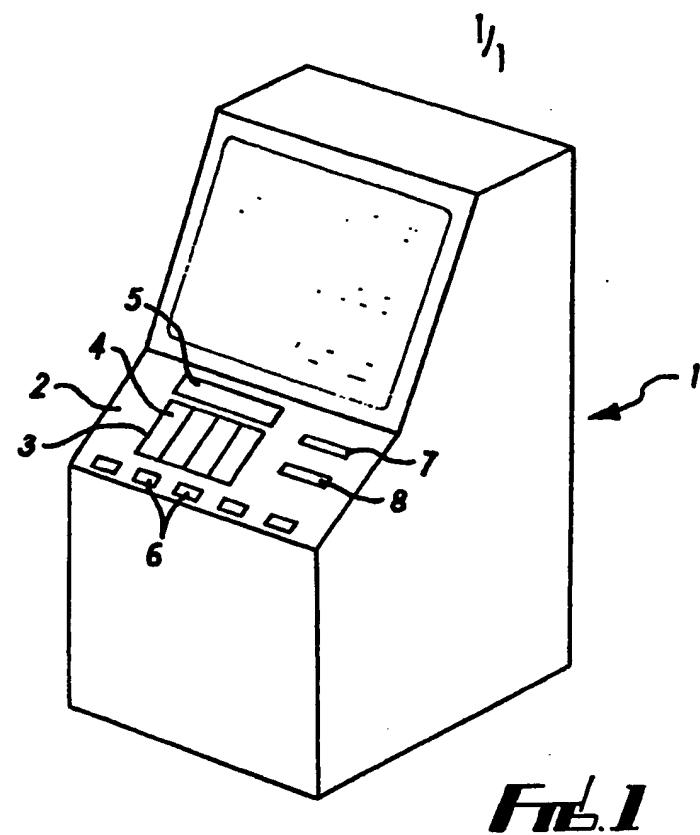


Fig. 1

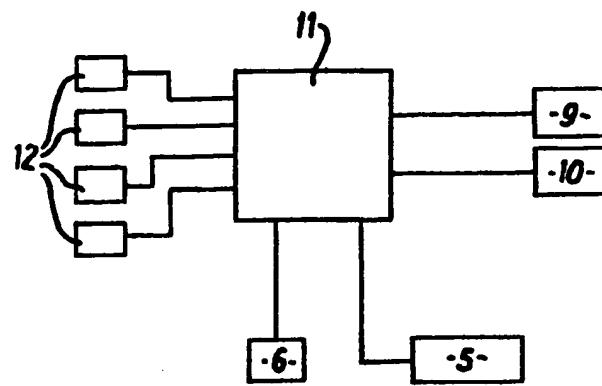


Fig. 2

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CREDIT-OPERATED MACHINES

This invention relates to credit-operated award-giving machines.

Credit-operated award-giving machines, such as fruit machines, are customarily operated by insertion of coins, or coin-simulating tokens, 5 into a slot of the machine, and any winnings are made available to the player as coins or tokens at a dispense outlet.

It has also been proposed to use storage cards of the magnetic-stripe credit card kind. The card is inserted into a read/write device on the machine and pre-stored units of credit on the card are decremented as 10 games are played. Winnings are returned to the player by adding stored credit onto the card. A system of this kind is described in GB 1558521. With this arrangement, however, the award of winnings does not take place as a readily discernible action separate from the consumption of credit in the playing of games, whereby the pleasure of 15 winning may be somewhat reduced and, in a possibly undesirable or unacceptable manner, the player may be encouraged to return to the machine all winnings.

An object of the present invention is to provide a convenient means of operating an award-giving credit-operated machine whereby 20 the giving of awards is clearly separated from the supply of machine-operating credit.

According to the invention therefore there is provided a credit-operated award-giving machine having a read and write system for reading from and writing to portable storage devices presented to 25 said system, said system being adapted to operate the machine in response to reading of such a storage device having at least a

predetermined value of credit stored thereon and then to cause said stored predetermined value of credit to be cancelled from said device, and said system also being adapted to write to such a storage device to store thereon an award value in an action separate from said reading

5 action.

With this arrangement, operating of the machine can be effected in a convenient manner and at the same time, advantageously, the making of an award is discernibly separated from the supply of machine-operating credit.

10 The read and write system may have separate locations on the machine and in this case there may be a single portable storage device used for both supply of credit and storage of awards, the device being presented to one location for supply of credit and being transferred physically to the other location for storage of awards thereby to achieve 15 the separation of actions. Alternatively, two devices may be used, one being a credit supply device which is presented to one location and the other being an award storage device which is presented to the other location.

It is also possible to use a single location on the machine for the 20 read and write system, in this case there being two devices respectively a credit supply device and an award storage device.

With regard to the storage devices, these may take any suitable form. Devices having magnetic materials (such as credit-card type devices), and i.c. (integrated circuit) devices may be used, the read 25 and write system correspondingly comprising magnetic read/write apparatus, or other proximity or contact read/write apparatus as desired

and as appropriate.

The machine may be of any suitable form and may be a games-playing machine e.g. of the fruit machine kind having a system for the random selection of a combination of symbols (e.g. rotatable reels). Alternatively 5 the machine may be a betting machine as described in our copending application No. 8904536.3, or any other suitable kind of machine.

The credit may be of monetary value as also may be the award value. Other forms of credit and/or awards may also be used. The awards may be of the same nature as the credit e.g. in that each 10 award is equivalent to a proportion or multiple of the said predetermined value of credit. Alternatively, the awards may represent prizes or the like unrelated to the value of credit.

Stored awards may be retrievable or utilisable in any suitable manner. There may be provision for retrieving awards at the machine 15 e.g. by re-presenting the award-storage device to the machine so as to initiate dispense of money or other awards from the machine. As appropriate it may be possible to re-present the award-storage device to the machine so that the stored awards can be used as credit for operating the machine. The machine may incorporate a read/display 20 device so that the award stored on the award-storage device can be read and displayed e.g. with a digital display.

Alternatively, there may be apparatus, separate from the machine, to which the award-storage device can be presented for retrieval of the award. This may be automatic apparatus which gives automatic 25 dispense e.g. of money, or it may be of the nature of a read/display device which gives a display of an award value and which can be used

to cancel the award value. In this way, for example; a responsible person can read the award-storage device, make a pay-out and then cancel the value from the device.

The invention will now be described further by way of example 5 only and with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a diagrammatic perspective view of one form of a fruit machine according to the invention; and

Fig. 2 is a schematic block circuit diagram of the machine.

As shown in the drawings, a fruit machine comprises a floor-standing 10 housing 1 having a front display panel 2 with a window 3 through which can be seen the peripheries of four side by side rotatable reels 4. There is also a digital display device 5.

Beneath the reels 4 there is a range of press buttons 6. At one 15 side of the front panel 2 there are slots 7, 8 leading to respective read/write systems 9, 10 for reading/writing from/to magnetic-stripe storage cards of the credit card kind.

Within the housing 1 there is a control system comprising a main 20 microprocessor control unit 11 connected via interfaces to the read/write systems 9, 10, stepper motors 12 for the reels 4, the press buttons 6 and the display device 5.

To operate the machine a player requires a credit-card type storage device having stored thereon one or more units of credit corresponding to the cost of a game. The card is inserted into the first slot 7 so as to be read by the related read/write system 9. The 25 total value of credit on the card is displayed on the device 5. The machine is operated and the system 9 writes on the card to decrement

the number of stored credit units.

The machine can now be used in the usual way by pressing a start button 6 to cause the reels 4 to rotate for respective different random periods. When they come to rest a selected combination of 5 symbols is displayed on a win line. If the combination is a winning combination an indication is given, e.g. on the display device 5, the card can be inserted into the second slot 8 and the value of the win is written onto the card by the system 10. The card is also read in the second slot 8 and the total value of stored awards is displayed on the 10 display device 5.

The card can be re-presented to the first slot 7 and further games can be played.

Alternatively, the card can be presented to a separate card reader (not shown) e.g. behind a counter or bar where a responsible person 15 can read the award value of the card, cancel the award value and make a corresponding payment, or prize award, to the player.

With this arrangement, the machine can be operated in a simple, convenient and versatile manner using the storage card and, due to the use of the two slots 7, 8 with separate read/write systems 9 and 20 10, supply of credit for machine operation occurs as a wholly separate action from the delivery of win awards.

It is of course to be understood that the invention is not intended to be restricted to the details of the above embodiment which are described by way of example only.

CLAIMS

1. A credit-operated award-giving machine having a read and write system for reading from and writing to portable storage devices presented to said system, said system being adapted to operate the machine in response to reading of such a storage device having at least a predetermined value of credit stored thereon and then to cause said stored predetermined value of credit to be cancelled from said device, and said system also being adapted to write to such a storage device to store thereon an award value in an action separate from said reading action.
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- 10 2. A machine according to claim 1 wherein the read and write system has separate locations on the machine.
3. A machine according to claim 2 wherein a single said portable storage device is used for both supply of credit and storage of awards.
4. A machine according to claim 1 wherein the read and write system has a
15 single location on the machine and two said portable storage devices are used being respectively a credit supply device and an award storage device.
5. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 4 wherein the storage device is a magnetic storage device.
6. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 4 wherein the storage
20 device is an integrated circuit device.
7. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 6 which is a games-playing machine.
8. A machine according to claim 7 which is of the fruit machine kind.
9. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 6 which is a betting
25 machine.
10. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 9 wherein the said credit

comprises monetary value.

11. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 10 wherein the award value comprises monetary value.
12. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 11 wherein provision is made for retrieving awards at the machine.
13. A machine according to claim 12 wherein said provision involves the use of stored awards as credit for operating the machine.
14. A machine according to claim 12 or 13 incorporating a read/display device so that the award stored on the award-storage device can be read and displayed.
15. A machine according to claim 1 substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.
16. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 15 in combination with separate apparatus to which the award-storage device can be presented for award retrieval purposes.
17. The combination according to claim 16 wherein the separate apparatus may comprise a read/display device which gives a display of an award value and which can be used to cancel the award value.